



Solidarity

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JUNIOR DOCTORS: RIGHT TO STRIKE



On Tuesday 12 January junior doctors across England and Wales struck in defence of their contracts.

Junior doctors have huge support from the public. Polls on the strike day showed 66% of the public support the strikes. Doctors argue that this is a fight to save the NHS, and it is being seen that way by the public.

Aya, a GP trainee from London, told *Solidarity* that she was on strike because, working in a poor area, she has seen directly how "all of the welfare cuts have really affected people's health".

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Housing bill: Fight to save social housing!

By Jim Fraser

With the Housing Bill, and various associated ancillary legislation, the Tories have launched an all-out offensive to destroy social housing, especially council housing, once and for all.

There are a number of provisions put forward including the ending of security of tenure and the ruling that all council tenants must submit to a review of their tenancy every two to five years. The Tories do not specify what happens after their housing status is reviewed, but George Osborne and several other

cabinet ministers have given every indication they “will be required” to move into private rented accommodation.

Indeed Osborne and several senior Tories have talked privately of “forcing” tenants into the private sector.

In the House of Commons on Tuesday 12 January Tories even voted against an amendment to the Bill which would have required landlords to make their housing safe.

Local authorities will be compelled to sell off all their “high value” housing as soon as it becomes available. All new council

housing currently being built must be immediately sold off on completion. As soon as tenants move from any council property, that property must then also be sold off. This is supposedly to subsidise the sale of housing association housing, but there is a total disconnect between the two. The real reasons are to reduce council housing stock and to enable private landlords to more easily acquire that stock.

George Osborne has talked repeatedly of the unfairness of “those who can well afford it” paying less rent than those in private housing. The Tories are introducing the “pay to stay” tax which means anyone,

or any family, with a combined income of £40,000 or more (£30,000 outside London) will have to pay the local market rent. This will mean massive rent increases for huge numbers of people. In some parts of London the increase could be £300-£600 a week.

All of the money raised will go to the government, none to the local authority.

Great fanfare has been given to the new “starter homes” programme. These will be built by private developers and sold at 80% market prices. In London that means £400,000 to £900,000 each, which puts them beyond the

pocket not only of the low waged but also of those on “average income.” Even outside London they will not exactly be “affordable” to most people.

The Tories have created the greatest housing crisis since 1945. This will make it dramatically worse and will be a disaster for millions of people. Housing is the most crucial issue of the moment.

If the Labour and trade union movement and the tenants’ movement unite against this vicious bill, the Tories can be defeated.

Nursing students defend bursaries

Danielle, a student nurse at Kings College London, spoke to *Solidarity* about the campaign to stop the government scrapping bursaries for nursing students

How did the campaign get started?

I was in the library one day and found myself getting annoyed about the bursary cuts, and the wider picture of the NHS — I was really furious. I started an event for a protest and 300 people said they were coming within an hour. It escalated from there. I needed some help, so I put out a message for a meeting in the uni, and we set up a committee. We’ve set up a national committee from there. So that’s how it started — being angry!

What do you think about what is happening to the NHS?

They’re privatising it — look at what they’ve done to the doctors, I find that really sad. They’re pushing the NHS to destruction.

I qualify in July. I know I’m coming in at the worst possible time — the government aren’t going to stop.

I did a six week placement in A&E before Christmas. I’d do nights, get no breaks, I’d watch nurses get no breaks. Because of all the A&E closures in West London, it’s jam-packed. It’s horrible. All healthcare professionals come into this to help people, and they’re treated appallingly.

What’s been the response so far?

It’s been incredible! People are really supportive of us. We had 5,000 people on our demonstration on 9 January. It wasn’t just students; there were qualified staff, doctors. We’ve been leafleting in hospitals in London. The wider public has been great. I’ll stop in a shop and tell people what’s been going on. Student nurses work so



On 9 January, thousands marched on Downing Street to protest against government plans to replace nursing students’ bursaries with loans. This would saddle new nurses with over £50,000 debt, despite even the profession’s highest salaries being limited to £25,000 (outside London). The government claim savings will allow them to train more nurses.

hard, and everyone is behind us.

We’re going to do a one hour walkout on the 10 February. They’re going to have a consultation in parliament — they’re still going to do it, of course — but we need to have demos all over the UK. We need to be outside Parliament making as much noise as we can.

I’ve planned a debate and I’ve asked Ben Gummer (Health Minister) if he’ll come; he’s said he’ll send someone. I’ve asked someone from Labour, too. I’d encourage everyone to do that.

We’re looking at a bigger combined march on different aspects of austerity. We need to keep the pressure on. If this walkout is a success we’ll do more in the future.

What do you think of student nurses joining unions and taking strike action?

I think it would be amazing. The NHS would fall apart without the students. We hold it together. We take the place of staff who have been cut. Not that I would ever want to jeopardise care, but we hold it together: so a strike would be really effective. I don’t think the government realise how hard we work and how much we contribute to the NHS.

I am a member of Unison, Unite and RCN. I’m covering them all!

Other nurses should join the national committee for the NHS Bursary Campaign. What would be really good is if they spoke to members of the public and other nurses and formed their own committee. Then we need to collaborate, all together, to plan massive national actions. They came for the doctors, for the students, and then they’re coming for the nurses and midwives. If we don’t unite now and stand against this, in the bigger picture we are going to lose everything.

I think nursing students haven’t been active before for years. I think the junior doctors thing is buoying them up. What they’re doing with the doctors, it fits in with the bigger picture. People are figuring out what’s going on. I think at my uni previously people thought some of us, the activists were a bit mad, but they’re coming on board now.

The junior doctors at KCL have really helped, and one in particular has put us in touch with loads of people.

We’re all in this, we’re not different professions, we’re one profession because we want the best for our patients.

Lambeth library workers will strike to save libraries

Lambeth Libraries staff have voted overwhelmingly for strike action to save jobs and keep all ten Lambeth libraries open

Staff voted 89% to strike against plans to close libraries and cut jobs. Unison will now be discussing extended strike action with the library workers in the borough. This strike vote follows a community campaign to keep

the libraries open, as well as a walk out by staff in December when news circulated that books were already being taken out of one of the libraries.

Several Labour Party wards have passed motions criticising their own council’s library closure programme and supporting the library staff and local community in their efforts to keep the library service open.

Stop the Saudis’ bloody war in Yemen!

By Dan Katz

The squalid Saudi-led — and Western backed — war on Yemen continues.

The Saudis are attempting to impose their own man — Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi — on the country. Hadi has little support in Yemen and is currently in exile in Saudi Arabia.

The Saudis face a movement led by Houthi militias. The Houthis are a minority strand of Shia Islam, whose heartland is in north Yemen. The Houthis have support from forces loyal to former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh.

The Saudis fear that the Houthis are instruments of Shia Iran.

Around 3000 civilians have died since the Saudis started bombing in March 2015. In the latest outrage four died on Sunday in a Saudi rocket strike which hit a Medecins Sans Frontieres-run hospital.

Despite their formidable military machine Saudi Arabia has been unable to defeat the Houthis, or even remove them from the capital, Sanaa.

The war and naval blockade of Yemen mean that over 20 million people — or over 80% of the population — now need food and other

aid. Two million, including 1.3 million children, are considered “acutely malnourished”.

2.5 million people are internally displaced. Very few in the country have access to reliably safe drinking water, and 14 million have no access to basic healthcare. 600 health facilities have stopped functioning due to lack of staff or medicines.

Even before this war began half of Yemen’s population lived under the poverty line, and two thirds of Yemen’s young people were unemployed.

None of the contending forces in this war have progressive intentions. No good can come from this conflict. Those that may gain are Al Qaeda and Islamic State, both of which are active and growing.

The Houthis have been accused by Human Rights Watch of political violence against opponents — particularly an Islamist Sunni political movement, Islah — in Sanaa. Islah has received Saudi money in the past. This conflict is an aspect of the hardening sectarian divisions across the Middle East.

The UK should stop providing political and military support for the Saudi regime. The UK government must immediately end arms sales to the Saudis.

Solidarity with refugees! Open the borders!

By Vicki Morris

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reported shortly before Christmas that more than one million migrants had made their way into the European Union, Germany in particular, in 2015.

The overwhelming majority of these migrants made risky sea crossings, mainly from Turkey to Greece. Nearly 4,000 drowned.

The EU's statistical office Eurostat reported that 942,400 people have claimed asylum. The number of migrants in 2014 was a quarter of this figure.

The figures sound high — from a certain vantage point, that of UKIP perhaps, who don't want any more migrants; or from the point of view of a bourgeois politician anxious about public opinion turned hostile to the migrants by the right-wing media. But from the viewpoint of the refugees themselves the statistics are irrelevant: these are individuals and families fleeing war,



Calais migrant camp: containers are being used as shelter

hunger, and political persecution, in countries across the Middle East, Africa and Asia. They are right to seek refuge and asylum. And for the labour movement and socialists in the EU the statistics should be irrelevant too, except inasmuch as they must inspire us to respond more urgently to the needs of our fellow humans.

The population of the EU is 503 million, and its member states together can easily cope with this influx of people — if they have the will. The EU is a large enough area to take many times more than the number arriving: there is not a problem of Europe being overcrowded. The EU is rich enough to settle the incomers: depending on

the measure used, it is the largest or second largest economy in the world, with a GDP in 2014 of around £9.5 trillion, or £20,500 per person. The rich should pay to rebuild our public services so that everyone, settled or migrant, can have a decent life. Moreover, migrants, who are generally younger than the settled population, contribute to the economy. The Tories won't readily admit it, but they were able to announce a slightly less austere spending review than feared in November 2015 because of the boost to the economy from... increased immigration.

We should argue that EU governments have a duty to provide the resources to cope with this crisis.

Yet an EU summit in Brussels in December hardened their hearts to the human need on their doorstep and could only agree to "regain control over their external frontier through stricter checks and other border management actions next year" (*Independent*). After making some humane gestures throughout the summer and autumn, their emphasis now is on keeping people out. For example, on 11 January Sweden reintroduced border checks for people arriving from Denmark, sandwiched between Germany and Sweden. Denmark is responding by starting to check people entering Denmark from Germany. The response of the EU governments to the refugee crisis now threatens freedom of movement.

The weather has been unusually mild so far this winter across much of Europe, but the snows are falling now in the Balkans which most of the refugees pass through on their way to Northern and Western Europe.

Conditions at the Calais migrant camp dubbed the Jungle are dire. The numbers there have swelled, and now 6,000 people, including hundreds of unaccompanied children, are living in tents in insanitary conditions. Relations with the French police have deteriorated and the refugees face increasing repression as their attempts to stow aboard lorries across the Channel become more frenzied and desperate. Migrants regularly die attempting this journey: just before the New Year, 15-year-old Masud from

Afghanistan died in a lorry — he was trying to reach his sister in the UK, where he would have been able to make an asylum claim. Far-right gangs are attacking the camp.

The days of the Jungle may be numbered, as the French authorities want to reduce it to a settlement for 2000, and disperse the remainder of the migrants, but they are not offering them the decent life they need instead.

Calais Migrant Solidarity reported on 11 January 2016:

"In Dunkerque, MSF (Medicins Sans Frontieres) had planned to make a better camp. They were stopped by the French government who required the camp to be closed; MSF refused to build a closed camp. Negotiations are pending but the message is clear."

Labour's Shadow human rights minister Andy Slaughter visited the Jungle at the start of January. He said:

"This is not in truth a refugee camp, so much does it lack the basics of life.

"It is a stain on the French state, but it is not a problem of which we can wash our hands.

"Our Government has contributed nothing but the money to build a razor-wire fence between the camp and the Eurotunnel entrance. That is to their shame."

Socialists have a duty to demand: open the borders! House, clothe and feed the refugees, and offer them a decent and safe future.

• Quote taken from libcom.org, <http://bit.ly/22XTQB1>

No Nazis in Dover demonstration

On Saturday 30 January neo-Nazis and violent racists from across the UK will head to the coastal town of Dover for an anti-refugee protest.

Join the counter demonstration: on.fb.me/ITSUdGL

Syria: token and real wars

By Simon Nelson

At the start of December David Cameron called Labour MPs who were voting against British bombing in Syria "a bunch of terrorist sympathisers". He claimed he had a "moral duty" to bomb.

As of the beginning of January, actual British air strikes in Syria have been so few as to be militarily meaningless. The first British bombings were on 3 December, on Daesh wellheads. A US source quoted in *Private Eye* described them as less than worthwhile. After further strikes on 3, 5, and 6 December, there have been no operations up to early January, other than an unmanned drone on Christmas Day.

David Cameron's primary motive was nothing to do with "moral duty" or any real plan to defeat Daesh, but to lodge a claim to be at the table when the time comes for "meaningful talks" and to be seen to support the USA.

Professor Malcolm Chalmers from the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) think-tank said of the British bombing, before it started: "It will not make a big operational

difference". "It is important symbolically, useful operationally, but not transformative."

Russian airstrikes, however, have done much destruction, against militias opposing the Assad regime — and against schools, villages and other civilian targets.

The Assad regime is besieging the rebel-held town of Madaya. More than 40,000 people have been blockaded for six months. No aid reached the town from October

until 11 January. In the meantime, probably people died of starvation.

Assad-controlled Foah and Kefraya are besieged by rebels, and Assad insisted that aid would be allowed into Madaya only if it could also get in to Foah and Kefrayah.

Some 400,000 people live in areas currently under siege from Assad or from rebel forces. The siege of Madaya continues.

Leaked documents show that the US does not expect that Assad will be removed before Barack Obama leaves office, and it has no clear plan to remove him or get a settlement in Syria even after that.

Back in 2013, Cameron was pressing Parliament to have British bombing in Syria against Assad. In 2015 he got Parliament to vote to bomb against Daesh, not caring much if that helped Assad. Assad's backers within the EU now include Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic.

Back in 2011 Assad himself claimed the destabilisation arising from the "Arab Spring" would eventually push Western governments back to supporting more secular authoritarian regimes like his own.

Arab opinion

The 2015 Arab Opinion Index was published at the end of December.

Based on 18000 interviews across 12 Arab countries the Index shows 89% in opposition to ISIS, and 7% in support.

80% describe themselves as living in need or hardship.

72% favoured democracy, and 22% were opposed.

87% consider themselves religious, or very religious. 10% are not religious or non-believers. 33% support Islamic sharia in their country.



Residents of Madaya wait for food on the day the aid convoys arrive

Analyst Aron Lund notes that the rebel militias, apart from the Kurdish YPG and Daesh, have been unable to create infrastructures of public administration. Assad's control of most public administration allows him to continue to promise his supporters and those who live in towns under Government control that he is the only one capable of planning a post war Syria. But since the end of 2014, government subsidies on basic goods have been cut; fuel supplies have been cut; the loss of the Jordanian border has made it harder to trade with Iran and Arab markets.

Assad's regime showed signs of resilience in 2014. But Syria Comment reports that:

"Assad lost a lot of territory in the first half of 2015. In March, a

coalition of Islamist rebels captured Idlib City in the north and Bosra in the south. In April, Jisr al-Shughour fell, followed by the Nassib border crossing to Jordan. In May, it was time for Ariha in Idlib, with other rebels pushing into the Ghab Plains. Further east, the Islamic State took Sokhna and Palmyra. Southern rebels grabbed a military base known as Brigade 52 in the Houran."

Mostly Assad has not regained lost terrain. His regime is brutal, widely discredited, and now nakedly sectarian. A palace coup to replace Assad by another leader from the Ba'ath party itself is possible, but as yet there are no alternative leaders that the US or even Russia could agree to back.

Star Wars belongs to the rebels

LETTERS

Eric Lee's critique of Star Wars is right about some things. But it is, as the Emperor would say, "mistaken, about a great many things"

Yes, it is okay to be critical of films and other cultural output. Yes, 'The Force Awakens' is a massive improvement on the awful prequel trilogy. Yes, it is rather casual about violence and war (as most films with "war" in their title are).

However, Eric's central point — that there is nothing to morally distinguish the two sides — is so wide of the mark that I wonder if Eric has been paying attention to the plot.

On some things, Eric is simply factually wrong. He claims that there is no reference to the Republic in the new film. But there is, both in the opening scrolling text and during the film. It does not show the bureaucratised democracy of the prequel Republic, and I hope that the next two films show more of how the political system works, but it is there.

Moreover, the Republic side is certainly not



Finn: trying to do the right thing

"ruled" by General Leia Organa as Eric claims. She is a leader of the Resistance [to the First Order] not of the Republic.

There is no evidence that the Republic is a "despotism", as Eric states. Indeed, when the First Order denounces it for "acquiescing to disorder", we can assume that means that it allows freedom.

The First Order is from the same place (the Dark Side) as the Sith and the Empire. It is

only that side which destroys whole planets, unless Eric is seriously arguing that destroying a planet-obliterating Star Killer in self-defence is the moral equivalent of blowing up a planet of peaceful civilians for no purpose other than testing such a weapon. Eric is simply wrong to assert that "neither side seems to care in the slightest about taking the lives of millions on the other side."

Moreover, it is only the Dark Side which orders the sadistic murder of populations of innocent civilians, only that side which steals babies from their families to program them as nameless killing machines. It is from this that one of the central characters, Finn, flees at the outset of the film. Although initially this is to run away from the First Order, and only later to join the Resistance, he is clearly rejecting his role as a killer for the First Order, at great risk to himself. So much for Eric's claim that in this film, "no one does anything because it is the right thing to do".

Even Eric's assertion of similarly militaristic uniforms on both sides is mistaken — while Stormtroopers wear identical uniforms including face-covering helmets, Resistance fighters are dressed in a less uniform, more

casual, more human way. The lead characters Finn, Rey, Han and Chewie do not wear uniforms at all.

In the years since the defeat of the Empire, the Republic has obviously experienced a loss of direction and clarity, and seemingly failed to build a new democratic order that would prevent the return of the Dark Side. With two more films to come, and the imminent return of Luke Skywalker, there is an opportunity for the films to consider these issues more deeply.

'The Force Awakens' has set the scene for this, introduced some excellent new characters (I would like to see a developing role for Maz Kanata as well as the two new leads). To the great reassurance of Star Wars fans, it has shown itself to be a continuation of the original trilogy rather than the prequels — I can accept the plot similarities because of the importance of doing this.

Star Wars is not beyond criticism, but it remains an epic story of popular resistance to sadistic totalitarian power. Star Wars belongs to the rebels.

Janine Booth, Hackney

Be bold, change opinion

By Gemma Short

As Clive Lewis says (*Solidarity* 388) there are many definitions of socialism. That makes it all the more important for socialists to debate ideas.

Lewis says a shift from austerity and neo-liberal capitalism to (or a return to) welfare-state capitalism would be a gain for the working class. Indeed, taxing the rich, free education, a NHS, well-funded schools, social housing, higher wages, public services would be real and important improvements, for the working class as opposed to the Tories' dark, dystopian future.

However all of these things can only be won, or re-won, as a result of class struggle, by workers fighting against capitalism. In fact some were concessions by the capitalists attempting to prevent workers struggles against capitalism developing further.

Workers' interests are fundamentally incompatible with capitalism. There is an inherent conflict of interests between workers and their bosses. Sometimes the balance of forces in that battle is tipped in our favour when workers win higher wages or increased taxation to fund public services. Even the much-lauded 1945 Labour government did not erase our inherent conflict with the bosses. As well as important advances for the working class, that government also kept anti-trade union laws in place, imposed a wage freeze, kept private managers in place in nationalised industries. The guiding principle remained capitalist profit.

We do not have to look far to see evidence of what lengths capitalists will go to defend the principle of profit against even a mildly reformist government. The way Corbyn is treated by the press is not simply a case of journalists being mean. British army generals openly considered a coup against the not-at-all-left-wing Wilson government; in 1975 the Queen's Governor General in Australia deposed a reforming Labour prime minister.

You may wish to be a pragmatist, as Lewis is, to have an honest assessment of public opinion and recognise that there are not millions of workers on the streets ready to take over their workplaces and run them for

themselves. However to take that as a measure of what is possible (and indeed right) is to forget that public opinion has been different at different points in history, and misunderstands how people's ideas are formed.

Ideas can be changed, but won't change without agitators who argue for a different world and a different way of looking at the world. In the run up to the general election polls indicated a big majority of people thought budget deficits needed to be reduced, and had right-wing views of benefits, migrants and other issues.

BE BOLD

But it is wrong for the Labour Party to allow itself to be pulled to the right by these opinions. By being bold in your politics and arguing for them publicly you can change opinions.

Corbyn and Momentum are not currently being bold; we all urgently need to start being bold so we can change Labour.

We are glad that Clive thinks Marxists should be able to be in the Labour Party, but we can't have any trust in the party's system that expelled them, or rely on it to reinstate them. The Compliance Unit (Labour Party section which has been handling expulsions) and the rules are the same as those put in place by the Blairites. They must be challenged if the party is to be changed.

The furore in the press about mandatory reselection hasn't actually been about mandatory reselection. In fact right-wingers have been taking issue with trigger ballots so that they can to replace them. Left-wingers should openly condemn these moves, rather than pandering to it by saying they won't push for mandatory reselection. Trigger ballots are a very high hurdle to be crossed to hold an MP accountable, it has been known for MPs to pack ballots with delegates who have rarely been seen before in local Parties. Every other area of labour movement selection, from councils to union general secretaries, are subject to mandatory reselection. Why not MPs?

Whatever we do will encounter a backlash from the right; we must step up to that fight rather than seek to avoid it.

The Socialist Party returns?

THE LEFT

By Phil Grimm

The Socialist Party is in a bit of a pickle.

In 1991, most of what had been the Militant tendency left the Labour Party, reconstituting itself firstly as Militant Labour and then as the Socialist Party (SP). And to justify their exit, they argued that the party had changed completely, transforming from what Lenin called a "bourgeois workers' party" (which socialists should try to intervene into) into a straightforward "bourgeois party".

This idea of Labour's irretrievable degeneration has functioned as something like an origin myth for the SP, serving not only to explain past history, but also to justify present practice. It used this perspective as a way of marking it out as different from other socialist groups, including Workers' Liberty. Don't waste your time pushing for socialist politics in Labour, they argued. Come and build the new workers' party.

Jeremy Corbyn's election as Labour leader therefore must be really awkward for them. For years, opposition to austerity and anger at social injustice has been bubbling away in British society, but it never quite broken through into party politics. Now it has, spectacularly, and in the one place that the SP has spent decades telling people it wouldn't.

Consequently, the SP's attitude to the Corbyn Labour Party has been contradictory. Their newspaper has welcomed the creation of Momentum, and in many areas SP members have attended Momentum meetings. In my own area much of what the SP has done in the Momentum group has been constructive. But because they can't bring themselves to junk the idea that Labour itself is off-limits, they end up taking positions that cut against the logic of the tasks at hand.

For example, SP members have (rightly) argued that Momentum should oppose Labour councils implementing cuts. One very obvious way of trying to win that

struggle would be for socialists to kick up a fuss in their constituency Labour parties, to use the local party structures to put pressure on councillors. But the SP won't do that, since to be a member of a local Party would mean joining Labour, which is not ideologically kosher.

Similarly, the SP calls for right-wing Labour MPs to be deselected. But how can you deselect a Labour MP unless you're in the Party? And on a broader level, how you can be serious about bolstering the Labour left against the Labour right if you refuse to actually join the organisation?

UNIONS

The SP argues against unions like the RMT re-affiliating to the Labour Party. They say the Corbyn leadership might be toppled by the right, and therefore the unions shouldn't commit themselves to a party might revert to Blairism.

But the unions abstaining from internal Labour Party struggles makes the victory of the right more likely! The SP line is like refusing to help a friend in a fistfight on the grounds that he might lose, but wishing him well from the sidelines.

However there are indications that the SP is quietly preparing the ground for a return to Labour. We know that at least some SP members have taken out membership cards. There is muffled talk of "investigatory work". *The Socialist* has already made attempts to salvage the old "Labour is dead" theory from its disgrace by claiming that Corbyn's Labour represents "in effect, the formation of a new party."

There is no shame in having been wrong, so long as the error is honestly accounted for and rectified. If the Socialist Party has now come round to the idea that perhaps the Labour Party has some life in it, then good.

But it should carry out Labour work properly and whole-heartedly, and stop muddying the political water with bizarre, confused positions designed to cover up their own mistakes.

Call a demonstration to defend the NHS!

Labour and the TUC should call a big demonstration for reinstatement of the NHS as an adequately-funded public service, and to support the junior doctors and the student nurses.

The whole of the labour movement, including trade unionists who have industrial might because of their strategic place in the capitalist economy, should mobilise for our health, for our future, for a society which cares.

The junior doctors are right to strike, and the student nurses are right to demonstrate and to discuss planning walk-outs. The damage done to health care by their strikes is tiny compared to the damage that would be done by them complying with Tory plans.

Better than a strike by junior doctors alone would be strikes and demonstrations across the whole working class, to win quickly and decisively.

In the 1970s and the 1980s, other workers

struck several times in support of health workers. Read this for example.

BBC News, 16 June 1982: "The South Wales coalfield has come to a standstill after about 24,000 miners went on strike in support of health service workers, who are demanding a 12% pay rise.... More than 15,000 people marched through the streets of Cardiff, in the biggest demonstration of support for the workers seen so far.

"Some of the striking miners joined health workers on picket lines outside Welsh hospitals, which were reduced to emergency cover only. In Cardiff hospital pickets were backed up by members of the National Union of Seamen.

"Other unions also declared their support for the health service workers' pay claim. Demonstrators were joined by building workers, local authority workers, civil servants and delegates from the gas, electricity and water industries".

The mobilisation then was not enough to defeat Thatcher, but it was enough to limit Thatcher's damage to the NHS. After the Tories felt forced to dump Thatcher in 1990, they also felt forced to raise NHS spending sharply in the 1990s.

The Tories' anti-union laws of the 1980s defined working-class solidarity of that sort as a criminal act. Scared by those laws, the British Medical Association forced Dr Yannis Gourtsoyannis from the BMA junior doctors' committee to retract after he published an appeal for trade unionists to show support on the 12 January picket lines. NHS employers threatened the BMA with legal action.

The Tory *Sunday Times* damned all public solidarity with the junior doctors. Trying to smear solidarity as something "ordered" and "instructed", it screeched on 10 January:

"Jeremy Corbyn's hard-left supporters have been ordered on to hospital picket lines in support of a nationwide strike by junior

doctors this week... Momentum, the organisation founded out of Corbyn's Labour leadership campaign, has instructed activists to turn out alongside the medics on Tuesday.

"Last night, the Labour leader's spokesman failed to condemn the call and said that 'of course people will feel strongly' about backing the strikers".

For the *Sunday Times*, all human solidarity, any sentiment other than "I'm out to grab what I can in the market-place, and anyone who lingers to help others just deserves to be trampled", is damnable.

We must not let this government, made up of people who think like the *Sunday Times* and share the same class interests as the media billionaires, destroy the NHS.

Together, we should show our strength with a big national demonstration, supplemented and built up to by local mobilisations to support every picket line and protest.

Junior doctors are right to strike!

On Tuesday 12 January junior doctors across England and Wales struck against new contracts which would mean an extension of already long hours and cuts in pay.

Strikes originally planned for December were called off after the government and NHS employers agreed to negotiations after months of refusing to talk. Those negotiations achieved very little on the key demands of the British Medical Association (BMA) and so strikes were reinstated.

Junior doctors have huge public support: polls on the strike day showed 66% of the public in support of strikes. Doctors argue that this is a fight to save the NHS, and it is being seen that way.

Aya, a GP trainee from London, told *Solidarity* she had been worried at first that it was difficult to justify defending doctors' working conditions when many others were even worse off. Working in a poor area, she has seen how "all of the welfare cuts have really affected people's health". But she was out on strike because she had decided that, "It's about protecting the NHS as we know it. If doctors leave, who's going to treat you? You'll have to pay, and what happens to the people who can't pay?"

Further strikes have already been announced for 26 January (with emergency care only) and escalating to a full withdrawal of labour on 10 February. This clear statement of intent from junior doctors will need to be backed up with local organisation, substantial picket lines and efforts to keep rank-and-file doctors involved in the campaign through local meetings and demonstrations between strikes.

Doctors at St Thomas' hospital, London, were joined on the picket line by Dennis Skinner MP, Caroline Lucas MP, and Natalie Bennett of the Green Party. Activists from the Disabled People Against Cuts, health campaigners and socialists were also there. One doctor told *Solidarity* that "the nurses need to strike next, they deserve much better."

Around 30 activists took part in a bicycle flying picket visiting hospitals in London, delivering fruit and biscuits to the picket lines and carrying banners with the slogan "not fair, not safe". When the flying picket visited the Royal London Hospital, doctors were angry about the media. Junior doctor Daniel said "the media have exaggerated the disruption. A&E is open, we have the same staff lev-



Clockwise from top left: Middlesbrough, Royal Free London, "flying pickets", Guys.

els as a bank holiday". Another doctor Nat said, "the radio said it's all just about doctors' pay, Jeremy Hunt didn't mention they're cutting nursing bursaries!"

The picket line at the Royal London hospital turned into a rally, with lots of banners from trade unions, particularly Unison. Pickets were joined by students from Queen Mary's university. Cam Stocks, a medical student and member of the NCAFC, told *Solidarity*: "This the latest attack in a fully-fledged assault. The government is already selling off services piece by piece — but this is not enough and now they are coming for workers. The government wants us to either work 40% more for the same pay, or deplete week-day resources to cover the weekend. The option for fair and safe working conditions and pay had never been on offer from them and that's why we're fight-

ing."

When the flying picket visited Guys Hospital, London Bridge, doctors were standing in the freezing cold talking to commuters, with stalls, petitions, stickers, banners and leaflets. "We've not had any grumpy people yet! Thanks so much for coming down to support" one doctor said to *Solidarity*.

At Homerton Hospital, London, about 40 junior doctors and their supporters leafleted the public and patients. They were joined by members of the NUT, NUJ, PCS and RMT, and got a very warm response from passing bus drivers. Other hospitals across London had large and lively picket lines and "meet the doctors" events.

About 50 junior doctors and supporters were at the Queen's Medical Centre in Nottingham, in high spirits despite cold rain, with another picket line at the City Hospital.

The stakes are high

By Pete Campbell

Junior doctors have taken a courageous step.

Attempted bullying by the media, government and certain sections of hospital managements has been convincingly fought off. Industrial action has been a huge success.

I never thought I would be part of a strike. Industrial action is not just about a day away from work. It is a collective agreement by the workers that their conditions are so bad that they must break their contract and refuse to work. For junior doctors this is an incredibly big deal.

Yet the stakes are higher still, and this is why our action has been so successful. If doctors are forced to work unsafe shifts above and beyond the staggering amount of work they already provide this will become the new normal.

Overstretched and overworked nurses and allied healthcare professionals will quickly be made to follow suit. An NHS already at breaking point will snap.

The potential ramifications of victory in this dispute go much further. Right to the heart of the NHS and the government's attempts to break it.



Dr Ruth Watson told *Solidarity* that "the government's proposal to staff hospitals at weekends to the same levels makes no clinical sense as the biggest bed blockers, elderly people, could not be discharged to social services at weekends".

Many cars beeped support and not one patient or relative visiting the hospital complained about the strike. Momentum supporters and members of Broxtowe Labour Party visited. Dr Roma Patel, who helped organise the rallies, thanked *Solidarity* for its support.

At Trafford General Hospital, Manchester, doctors held placards saying "tired doctors make mistakes", highlighting how increasing doctors' already long working hours is going to harm patient safety.

Michel Husson, a French Marxist economist and author of books including *Un pur capitalisme*, analyses the growing elements of a new crisis in a world economy only patchily recovered from the crash of 2008.



By Michel Husson

World growth is slowing, mainly in the emerging economies with the exception of India.

This tendency is self-reinforcing, with a fall in prices of raw materials, and it is being transmitted to the advanced countries. International trade is also slowing down, at the same rate as world GDP, as if productive globalisation had reached a ceiling.

In the “financial sphere”, quantitative easing is feeding stock-market bubbles rather than productive investment, which is stagnating. And the mere prospect — held back so far — of a renewed rise in Fed interest rates hangs like the sword of Damocles and is destabilising the currencies and markets of many countries. In short, “Uncertainty, Complex Forces Weigh on Global Growth”, to quote the IMF’s formula in its latest survey.

Quantitative easing means a central bank buying securities. In this way, the bank creates money which, injected into the economy, is supposed to kick-start it. We can even concede that this worked for a time in the USA.

But this injection of money is blind and nothing guarantees that the liquidity will be used in a manner that is favourable to investment. On the contrary, it will feed speculation and provoke an increase in asset prices which will benefit only the richest and which will lead to the creation of a bubble.

Quantitative easing simultaneously leads to a reduction in interest rates. This could contribute to re-starting investment in housing and productive investment in general. A recovery in investment is in any case the key issue for an overall recovery. But that recovery has not taken place, because businesses are not investing. They restore their margins, make money, increase mergers and acquisitions, pay out dividends, but their investment is flatlining.

INTEREST RATES

The injection of money leads to an inflation in financial asset prices, but not to inflation in prices of current goods and services.

Low interest rates and weak inflation together mean that real interest rates (discounting inflation) cannot become strongly negative. Lawrence Summers is right when he expresses a fear that “If a recession were to occur, monetary policymakers would lack the tools to respond. There is essentially no

room left for [monetary] easing...”

The result is a huge accumulation of private and public debt. According to a study by the McKinsey Global Institute, this debt represents almost 200,000 billion dollars at the world level, or 286% of global GDP, up on 269% in 2007, before the crisis struck. The increase is particularly clear for state debt, but also for businesses (figure 2).

In particular, the debts of non-financial businesses in emerging economies have quadrupled between 2004 and 2014. The IMF warns: “as advanced economies normalize monetary policy, emerging markets should prepare for an increase in corporate failures and, where needed, reform corporate insolvency regimes”.

This panorama thus leads us to two scenarios which could unleash the next crisis. The first has been described by François Morin in his latest book. His point of departure is the existence of financial bubbles. The trigger element could be the failure of a systemically important bank, with a chain reaction on other big banks.

The second scenario would be an increase in interest rates by the US Federal Reserve Bank and the hardening of conditions for financing business which the IMF refers to. It would lead to a bursting of bubbles, starting with the emerging economies, with repercussions for the rest of global finance.

FICTITIOUS CAPITAL

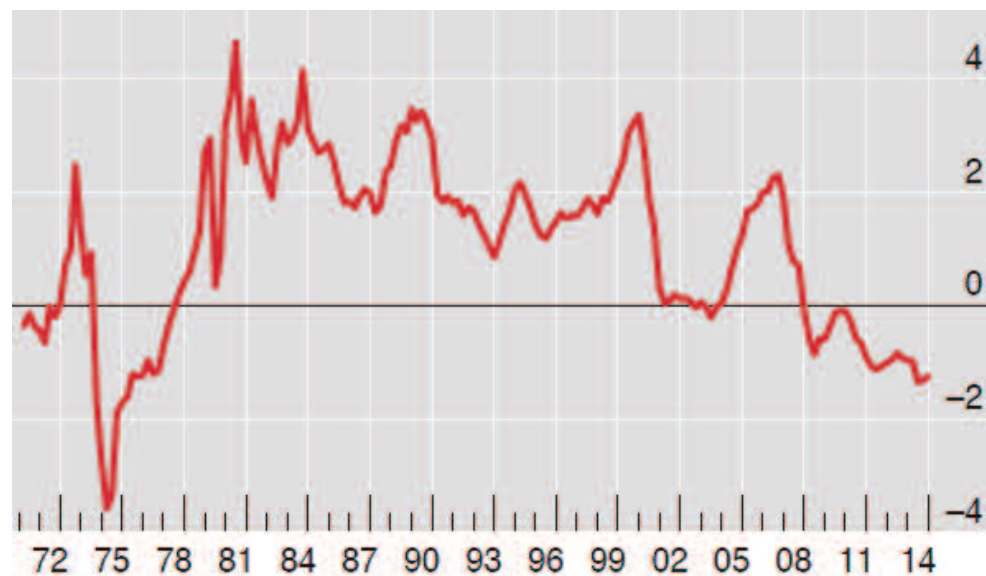
The period preceding the crisis was characterised by an enormous accumulation of fictitious capital, in other words, of drawing rights on future surplus value to be produced by the exploitation of wage labour.

For capitalism to start anew on a healthy basis, it would have been necessary to destroy this fictitious capital (and surely also a part of the productive capital). There have been losses, but around the world policies were guided by an essential principle: preserve the fictitious capital and the drawing rights that it represents. That was done in two ways: on the one hand, by converting private debts into public debts and, through austerity measures, drawing on surplus value; on the other hand, by massive injections of liquidity. In the first instance, we can say that capitalism respected the law of value, because it tried to adjust the ratio of fictitious capital / surplus value by increasing surplus value. In the second instance, on the contrary, it tried to deny or subvert the law of value by acting on the numerator. At the most fundamental level, the next crisis could be interpreted as being a severe re-assertion of the law of value.

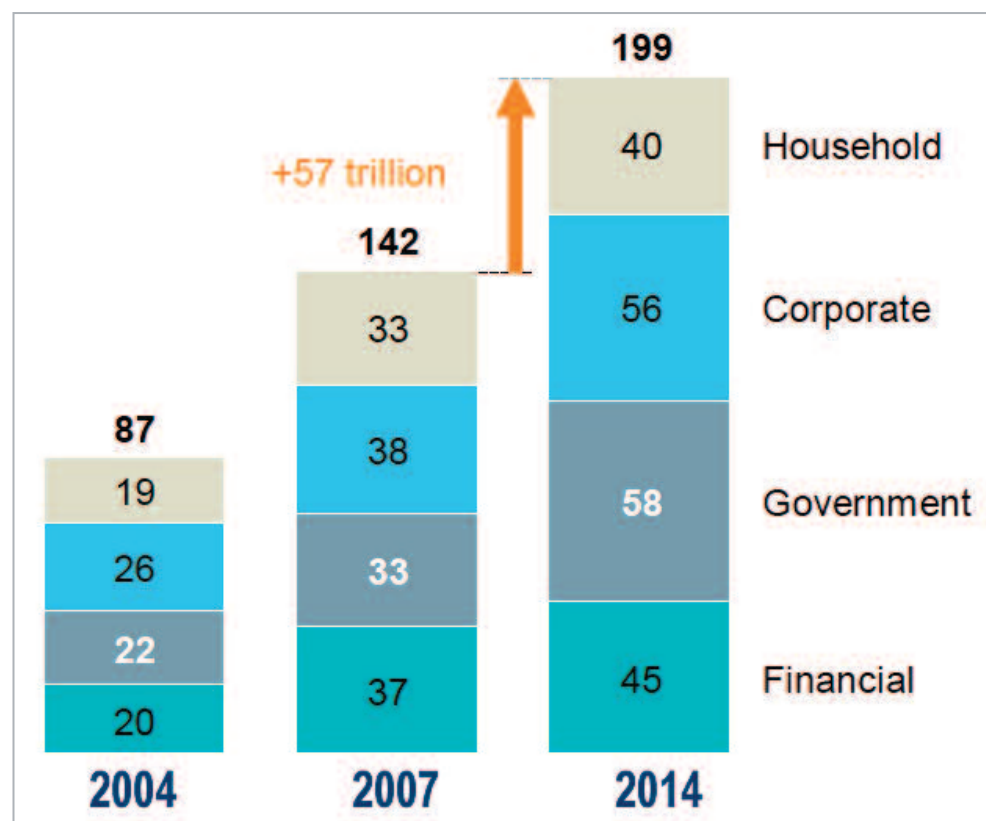
Before the crisis, the world economy was structured around a China-US axis, often called “Chinamerica”. This axis is starting to unravel, and without a doubt that is one of the key elements of the remodelling of the global economy.

The disintegration is symmetrical: on the one hand, the American model is departing from its pre-crisis operation — growth on credit — because of a renewed increase in the rate of saving and a reduced dependence on energy imports. These two factors reduce the motor role in the global economy which the

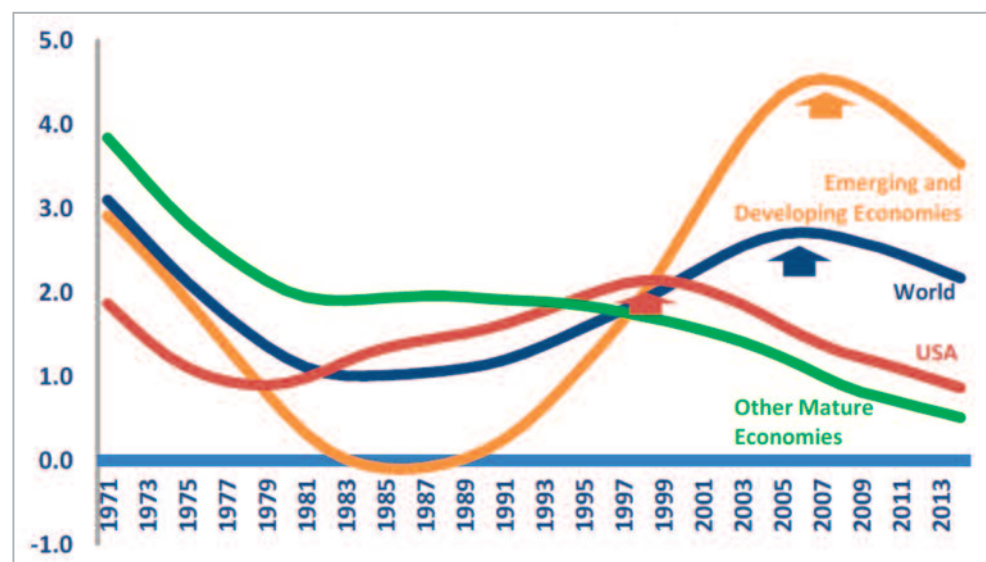
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1. Central bank official interest rates (Germany, USA, Japan), source: BIS-BRI

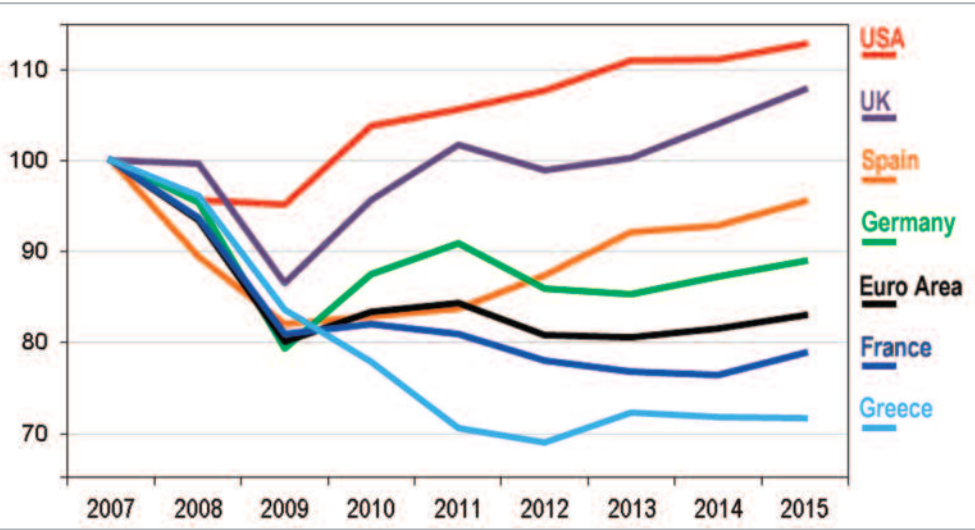


2. Global stock of debt, source: McKinsey Global Institute

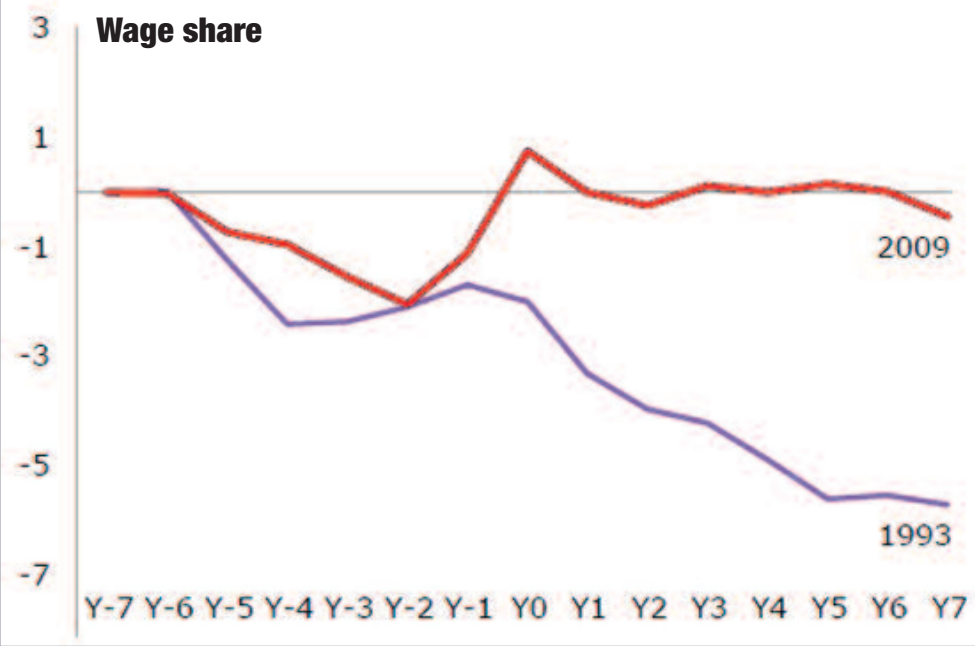
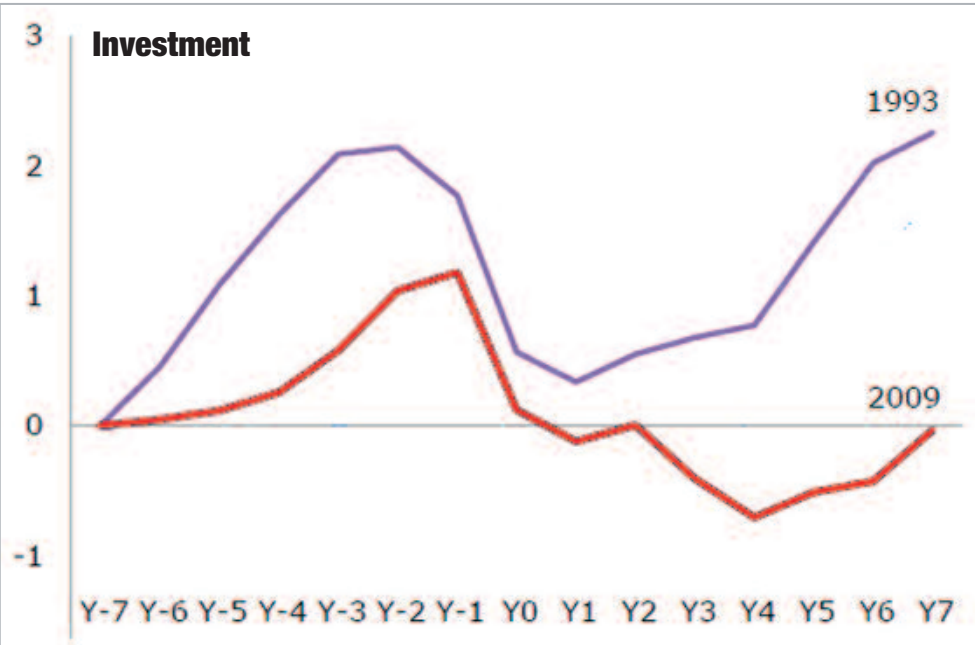


3. Tendencies in growth of labour productivity, source: The Conference Board

The coming crisis



4. Rate of profit 2007-2015. Base 100 in 2007. Source: Ameco, 'Net returns on net capital stock: total economy'



5. Two episodes of recession in the Eurozone

USA had previously played. China is currently in a transition phase, fraught and difficult to be sure, towards a model centred on domestic demand.

It is clearly moving away in any case from export-based growth: exports' portion of Chinese GDP went from 36% in 2006 to 26% today. The complementarity between the two biggest economies is declining and this move, with its collateral effects on developing economies and Europe, is unbalancing the whole world economy.

This reorientation of the Chinese economy is manifested by a change in the structure of its external trade, but also contributes to a slowdown in world trade. All the evidence is that the organisation of production across two different zones of the global economy characteristic of contemporary globalisation is reaching its limits, and, with it, the faster growth of global trade than of world GDP which it drove.

Underlying this configuration, there is the exhaustion of gains in productivity. This tendency is not new, as it was set in motion in the developed countries from the start of the 1980s, with strong fluctuations in the case of the USA. But, in the end, the emerging economies took up the baton and the productivity gains they made could in large part be captured by the "old" capitalist countries. At the start of the crisis, the emerging economies kept up world growth. But the great dislocation in the world economy could have reached an inflection point: the most recent data from the Conference Board show that growth in hourly labour productivity has clearly fallen in the emerging economies since the start of the crisis (figure 3).

ALTERNATIVE

There is no alternative for capitalism, other than getting the neoliberal model back on track, while trying to reduce destabilising factors.

In this quest for a way out of the crisis, the key question is clearly the restoration of the rate of profit, which can only be achieved in the first instance by an increase in the rate of exploitation. However, a striking fact is the disparity of performances. Among the advanced countries we can see differentiation in rates of profit, in the first place between the USA and the Eurozone, and then again within the latter (figure 4). This phenomenon implies a sharpening of competition between multinationals, which would tend to lead to a general downturn in the rate of profit. This is, in any case, the finding announced by the McKinsey Institute which foresees that global corporate profit should move from 9.8% of GDP in 2013 to 7.9% in 2025, more or less back to its 1980 level.

This divergence can be illustrated by means of a more detailed analysis of the conjuncture within the Eurozone. The exercise has been undertaken recently by the European Commission: it compares the timid current "recovery" with others. The results of this study are illustrated by figure 5 which compares the cycle 2002-2015 with the previous (1986-1999). In the two cases, the reference year is the year preceding the lowest point (respectively 1992 and 2008). Two key variables in the dynamic of capitalism are examined: investment and wage share. The profile are comparable in terms of the phase in the cycle preceding the recession. But what happens next tells two very different stories.

After the 1993 recession, investment fell,

but revived progressively and after six years regained its pre-crisis level. The wage share, which had risen slightly from its 1989 low point, returned to its inexorable downward tendency and fell by almost 4% of GDP between 1992 and 1999. It was a good way out of the crisis for capitalism, with an improvement in profitability and a recovery in accumulation.

CYCLE

But what has happened after the latest crisis is not a classic cycle.

Wage share increased strongly in 2009, then fell, but now it has stabilised at 2% of GDP higher than its pre-crisis level. In other words, the return on capital has not revived. And we see the effects on investment: it started to revive in 2011, following the pattern of the previous recession. Then the sharpening of austerity policies created a double dip in growth and investment fell again before starting to recover from 2014. Today it remains more than 1.5% of GDP lower than its pre-crisis level.

Understanding how finance and production interact is an essential but difficult task. A recent study by BIS economists sheds some light on this question by proposing a model which links "financial causes" to their "real consequences". The authors construct an index measuring the contribution of labour reallocation across sectors to aggregate productivity growth. Then they show that this index is significantly correlated (negatively) to financial booms. In other words, when credit grows faster than GDP, employment moves to sectors with lower productivity. They also show that the value of this index before the financial crisis determines the subsequent trajectory of productivity. And this mechanism is self-perpetuating, because the recourse to credit feeds what it is supposed to compensate for, i.e. the slowdown in productivity. This modelling of links between productive efficiency and financial movements seems particularly pertinent to an analysis of the Eurozone.

"CHAOTIC REGULATION"

One conclusion follows from this (too) swift review: the "great recession" has opened a period of "chaotic regulation" at the global level.

A new crisis seems today to be more or less inevitable. It is difficult to tell where the point of rupture will be (stock exchange, bank, debt, exchange rate?), but this episode will in any case be evidence of deep structural contradictions.

Global capitalism is currently subject to a fundamental tension. On the one hand, the crisis which opened in 2008 was dealt with according to two essential principles: don't clear the accounts (the "legacies"); reconstitute the pre-crisis neoliberal model, while seeking to control the most deleterious effects. In practice, this means guaranteeing the rights to draw on future surplus value acquired by the "1%" and the freedom of action of the banks and the multinationals. But the fundamental mainspring of capitalism's dynamism, that is, productivity gains, is currently heading towards exhaustion.

* Abridged from in *A l'Encontre*, October 2015, Translation: Ed Maltby.
• Full article online: www.workersliberty.org/hussoncq

A failure; and a crime

Janine Booth continues describing the history of what took place at Gallipoli. Part one was in *Solidarity* 388.

Guy Dawnay, one of Hamilton's staff officers, went to London to tell the truth about what was happening. On 14 October, Britain's Dardanelles committee sacked Hamilton, replacing him with Sir Charles Monro. By this time, the Allies were evacuating 600 men per day due to sickness and injury.

Monro studied the situation, and recommended abandoning the campaign and evacuating Gallipoli by the end of October. But Churchill denounced Monro with the words "He came, he saw, he capitulated". Despite everything that had happened, Churchill was still prepared to sacrifice more blood on the altar of his political ambition.

The War Council sent Kitchener to investigate. He pondered the situation while men around him continued to suffer and die. On 22 November, he recommended a partial evacuation, of Anzac and Suvla bays, but not of Helles. Five days later, a three-day storm set in, killing hundreds and causing frostbite to thousands more — men whose own leaders had said that they should not have been there any more, who had no prospect of 'winning' anything, who just needed to get out.

Still the Cabinet could not make its mind up, and Kitchener changed his view. Eventually, the Cabinet decided on 7 December to evacuate Suvla and Anzac. The evacuation was achieved without any casualties, managed with greater competence than the campaign ever had been.

THE NEW TURKEY

Turkey had won. It was defending its territory, and was not the aggressor in this particular campaign. But the "big picture" saw it not just supporting Germany's imperial ambitions, but also fighting for its national power from the ashes of the Ottoman empire.

As the same time as it was winning in the Dardanelles (known as Çanakkale), Turkey was also massacring the Armenian subjects of the Ottoman empire. It killed up to 1.5 million in a genocide that began with rounding up 250 Armenians in Constantinople on the same day that the Allies set out to land on Gallipoli's beaches. Last year, Turkey's brutal and unpopular Erdogan government moved the annual Çanakkale commemoration from its usual date of 18 March to 24 April. Many suspect that one hundred years on from both, Erdogan wanted the Çanakkale centenary to obscure that of the Armenian massacre.

After Ottoman's defeat in World War I, in the 1920s the Young Turks waged a war of independence led by Mustafa Kemal, who became the first President of Turkey, known as Kemal Atatürk, "father of the Turks".

Australia and New Zealand were both British dominions, loyal to the 'mother country'. When Britain advised it that war was looming in 1914, Australia was in the throes of an election. Both the existing Prime Minister and his Labor challenger (and soon-to-be successor) Andrew Fisher gave immediate support.

However, some in the labour movement opposed the war, and their numbers swelled as the truth of Gallipoli reached home. The labour movement successfully campaigned

against conscription in referenda in 1916 and 1917, the Australian Labor Party expelling pro-conscription leaders such as Billy Hughes.

Some Gallipoli veterans returned disgusted with war and refused to attend Anzac ceremonies. Hugo Throssell won the Victoria Cross for supreme bravery at Gallipoli, then declared in 1919 that "the war has made me a socialist". The last Australian Gallipoli veteran, Alec Campbell, who died in 2002, was a republican, peace activist and trade union supporter.

New Zealand imposed conscription in 1916. Those who refused, including several prominent Maori leaders, were either imprisoned or sent to war regardless. New Zealand left-winger Matt McCarten argues that: "Much of the bravery shown was by people who refused to join this insanity and suffered mightily for it. It's a reflection of the real mood of New Zealanders when, after the war, they elected these war opponents to Government."

Perhaps Gallipoli persuaded Australians and New Zealanders that being outposts of imperial Britain was no longer acceptable, that Britain's blundering and vicious rulers were not worthy of Australia's deference. But the official Anzac narrative of nation-building adds more. Its attempt to unearth glory from a blood-soaked, stinking killing field has several problems:

Gallipoli was not a war of national liberation, but an imperialist invasion. While other countries mark a national day on a date when they achieved self-governance or independence, Anzac Day falls on the anniversary of an attempted military conquest.

Anzacs were sent to their purposeless deaths not just by British commanders, but by cruel and inadequate home-grown commanders too. The narrative often mentions "manhood" alongside "nationhood", constructing masculinity as killing, dying, following ludicrous orders, putting up with mass slaughter, staying tough as you and your mates die and rot around you.

EXPLAINING GALLIPOLI

On resigning from the Government in November 1915, Winston Churchill said that in his view, "if there were any operations in the history of the world which, having been begun, it was worth while to carry through with the utmost vigour and fury, with a constant flow of reinforcements, and utter disregard for life, it was the operations so daringly and brilliantly begun by Sir Ian Hamilton in the immortal landing of the 25th April." He remained a champion of the campaign with a self-confessed indifference to the lives lost.

In 1917, the British government's Dardanelles Commission published its report, with gentle criticism of Hamilton, Stopford, Churchill, Kitchener and Prime Minister Herbert Asquith. Reading the detail of Gallipoli will add several names to your personal list of Great Scumbags of History, but as H. N. Brailsford cautioned in *The Herald*, "We shall go astray if we allow ourselves to pass a purely personal censure".

History cannot help but remember Gallipoli as a bloodbath and an embarrassing defeat for Britain and its allies. It is usually presented as a defeat born of incompetence and bad judgement. Those were certainly important factors, but to blame them alone dis-

guises what else Gallipoli represents — proof of the utter brutality of war and of the ruling class's:

- contempt for working-class life
- forgiveness of its leaders' disgraces
- undemocratic military hierarchies
- worthless causes for which it will spill working-class blood.

Establishment history in the 'Allied'

To the Warlords

By William Kean Seymour

A slaughterous and wanton year is past,
Yet Carnage is not glutted; horror still
Upon red horror piled declares your will,
And moans no stricken soul "I am the last."
Death's self before his victims is aghast
And loth your impious folly to fulfil;
Terror is wearied, and its echoes shrill
Protest above your cannon's belch and blast.

Yea, as this lone and desolate Christmastide,
Brown earth and white snow crimson for your pride.

Yea, at this feast of Him your lips profess
Moloch is sickened with his long excess,
And his pathetic legions slower ride
For pity of the world's immense distress.

(published in *The Herald*, 4 December 1915)



An anti-Stalinist Gramsci

Martin Thomas reviews *The Revolutionary Marxism of Antonio Gramsci* by Frank Rosengarten.

The first, and longest, essay in this book is a warm appreciation of the interaction between Gramsci and Trotsky.

The *Prison Notebooks* contains some sharp and, as even the mild-mannered Rosengarten puts it, "unfair" attacks on Trotsky's ideas. Yet, as Rosengarten documents, Gramsci had learned a lot from Trotsky in 1922-3. He was sympathetic to the 1923 Left Opposition. He opposed Stalinist "Third Period" policy in much the same way that Trotsky did, and "did not give any credence to the Stalinist slander of Trotsky". In jail he made efforts to get some of Trotsky's writings.

Both Gramsci and Trotsky were "associated with a philosophy of Marxist praxis that provides alternatives to the Stalinist model...". Both "had contempt for compromises that sacrifice principle for expediency", although "Gramsci was more willing than Trotsky to accept and live with the bureaucratised structures created by the Soviet leaders".

In contrast to many books on Gramsci, Rosengarten's is straightforward in style. As the title indicates, it knows that the Gramsci of the *Prison Notebooks* was the same Gramsci as the Bolshevik communist of Gramsci's years of public activity up to his jailing by Mussolini's fascist regime in 1926.

Rosengarten, who died in 2014, was primarily an expert on Italian literature. Most of his writings on Gramsci, collected in this book, were written in the mid-1980s, when he was nearing retirement, or after 2001, when he was well on in his 70s.

In the introduction he recalls the setting-up

of the International Gramsci Society in 1989. "Almost without exception the reaction was one of strong support and solidarity with the people struggling for change" in Eastern Europe that year. Rosengarten was one of many who identified with the "Eurocommunist" version of Gramsci — Gramsci as a democratic alternative to Stalinism. Unlike the "Eurocommunists" most influential in the Communist Parties of the 1970s, he remained a socialist.

countries records Gallipoli as a failure: it asks why we lost. As socialists, we dig deeper, and reveal Gallipoli as not just a military miscalculation, but as a particularly murderous episode in a war in which neither side deserved our support — two competing imperial line-ups battling out ruling-class interests with working-class suffering and death.

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An awe-inspiring, real-life hero

Kelly Rogers reviews *The Danish Girl*, in cinemas now.

***The Danish Girl*, starring Eddie Redmayne as Lili Elbe and Alicia Vikander as Gerda Wegener, offers an emotional and inspiring depiction of a trans woman's struggle to claim her identity in the early 20th century.**

The film follows the real-life story of Lili Elbe, a trans artist and one of the first people in the world to undergo gender reassignment surgery. Born Einar Wegener in Denmark in 1882, she became a successful landscape painter under this name.

When studying at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, she met Gerda Gottlieb, who she married in 1904. Gerda was also a very successful artist, in part as a result of her paintings and illustrations of Lili.

The Danish Girl picks up the story with the pair already married, and very close. It is Gerda who asks her husband (at this point, called Einar), to wear stockings and women's shoes and sit for a painting. This first tentative exploration of women's clothes triggers the beginning of a great transformation, where Einar, with increasing frequency, presents as Lili. She goes to parties as Lili, and hosts people in her home as Lili – introducing herself as Einar's cousin.

The film sensitively weaves together both the pleasure and pain of the process of the transition, first and foremost through some very intimate scenes with Redmayne depict-



Eddie Redmayne stars as trans woman Lili Elbe in *The Danish Girl*

ing Lili's difficult relationship with her body.

In *The Danish Girl*, Vikander's Gerda is very strong, and so deeply in love with her partner that despite her own, growing unhappiness she is prepared to support Lili through her transition. Importantly, when doctors declare Lili either a homosexual man

or insane, Gerda ultimately believes Lili when she says that she is in fact a woman, trapped in a man's body.

The development of their relationship is incredibly moving to watch. While their marriage ends up breaking on the shoals of Lili's transition and her choice to discard every-

thing that was "Einar's", including both his painting career and marriage, they continue to trust each deeply.

The Danish Girl does make some changes to Gerda's character, however. She is a tragic figure in the film. She is portrayed as a heterosexual woman, who loses her husband when he transitions. In reality though, rather than their marriage immediately cracking under pressure, Lili and Gerda remained in a relationship for many years following her transition. Many historical sources also suggest that Gerda was bisexual.

The choice to strip Gerda of these aspects of her character could have been made in order to focus on the heroine of the film, Lili, and her struggle. In any case, Gerda is a fascinating and inspiring figure too, whose compassion adds a lot of depth to the story of *The Danish Girl*.

Lili becomes one of the first people to undergo gender reassignment surgery, which involved a number of dangerous operations over the course of two years. The final of these led to her death, as a result of post-operative complications, shortly before her 50th birthday.

The Danish Girl is a very moving portrayal of a subject that is very obviously still relevant today. Many are applauding Redmayne's performance, while others are criticising the film for casting a cisgender actor to play a trans character.

Lili Elbe is an awe-inspiring, real-life hero to many trans people, propelled to greater fame by *The Danish Girl*. This film is absolutely worth going to see.

Benedict Anderson, 1936 – 2015

By Michael Johnson

Influential historian Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson died on 13 December in Java, the Indonesian island that did much to form his outlook as a scholar of south-east Asia and theories of nationalism.

Anderson was born on 26 August 1936 in Kunming, China, to an Anglo-Irish father and an English mother. His father was a commissioner in the Imperial Maritime Customs Service, and the family moved to California in 1941 to avoid the Japanese invasion during the Second Sino-Japanese War. From there they moved to Ireland in 1945, and Anderson studied at Cambridge, before receiving his PhD in Cornell in 1967, and teaching there until his retirement in 2002.

According to the *New Republic*: "As Perry Anderson, Benedict's younger brother and himself a distinguished historian, once noted, their father's experience fighting corruption in the colonial management of China left a lasting mark on the children. In 1956, as an undergraduate at Cambridge, Benedict Anderson was radicalised by the protests over the Suez crisis, where he found himself taking sides with anti-imperialist students — many of them born, like him, in the formerly colonised world — against British nationalists who supported the Anglo-French attempt to seize the Suez Canal. Out of his Cambridge experience, Anderson started on the path to becoming a Marxist and an anti-colonialist scholar."

As Anderson focused on Indonesia as a graduate student, the country suffered a wave of anti-communist violence, as the US-backed dictator Suharto seized power in a coup and massacred between 600,000 and a million Indonesians, many of them supporters of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI).

Along with Ruth T. McVey, Anderson wrote the so-called "Cornell Paper" discounting the Indonesian government's official account of the coup. It was widely circulated in dissident circles, and for his efforts Anderson was banned from Indonesia, able to return only in 1998 after the overthrow of the Suharto regime.

NATIONALISM

Though he came from a highly cosmopolitan background, it was the study of nationalism which made Anderson's name.

His 1983 study *Imagined Communities* was provoked in the immediate term by the national wars fought between the Stalinist states of Vietnam, Cambodia and China in 1978-79.

Coming at the beginning of a wave of studies in the following decade which obliterated the traditional literature on nationalism (including Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* in 1983 and Eric Hobsbawm's 1990 book of the same title), Anderson held that nationalism was a modern, socially-constructed, phenomenon despite nationalist claims that nations are ancient or even eternal.

Unlike Gellner or Hobsbawm, however, Anderson did not take a wholly dim view of nationalism, writing that "it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love..."

For Anderson, nations were "imagined communities". They are imagined "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion".

And nations are "communities" because "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings."

Anderson's focus was international, stretching far beyond the usual focus on Europe. As one summary put it: "While the preconditions were set in Europe, Dr. Anderson argued, the development of national consciousness began in the Western Hemisphere — in the United States, Brazil and the former Spanish colonies — in the late 18th century. From there, it spread to Europe and then to former colonies of Europe, in Africa and Asia."

Essential to his study was what Anderson called the "the revolutionary vernacularizing thrust of capitalism". Print capitalism, he argued, facilitated nationalism in filling the

Lions led by Jackals



Stalinism in the International Brigades

***Lions Led by Jackals – Stalinism in the International Brigades*, by Dale Street. Publication date: 15th January. Buy online: £4 including postage at bit.ly/lions-j**

void left by the collapse of feudal societies. The "standardization of national calendars, clocks and language...embodied in books and the publication of daily newspapers" allowed people to overcome vernacular diversity, enabling them to identify with and form themselves around national communities.

Anderson's death deprives us of a bold, highly original thinker who has done much to enrich our understanding of nationalism, colonialism, Indonesian history and much else besides.

Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
 - A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
 - A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
 - Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
 - A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression.
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
 - Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
 - Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
 - Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
 - Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!



More online at www.workersliberty.org Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

Debating council cuts

LABOUR

By Jean Lane

Labour Party Momentum members in Sheffield held a meeting with some of the Labour Councillors on Tuesday 5 January.

The purpose was to start, and hopefully continue, a dialogue about how to fight the next round of cuts that will be carried out by the council in March. The meeting was very well attended with about 60 people from different wards and constituencies.

It was clear from the councillors present that there was not an appetite for voting against a cuts budget. Their responses ranged from "please help us to find a better way to say to people that we are on your side but we have no choice" to "I'm fed up of hearing people bleating about what the council are having to do". To be fair, that was a lone voice and the response from everyone else in the room focussed on importance of siding with anti-cuts campaigns and campaigning actively against Tory austerity measures.

The idea of using reserves to avoid cuts while a campaign is being built was raised. There are

£11m in reserves, according to one of the councillors, which would be wiped out with one flood. Even if he is not being entirely honest about how many reserves there are, such a tactic is just delaying the inevitable choice of cut or fight.

There have been £300m worth of cuts so far in Sheffield and £50m still to come this year. Councillors described how they are trying to ensure the safety of services for the most vulnerable, to which one man, new to Labour and to Momentum, gave the impassioned response that "we are all vulnerable", citing the loss of jobs, of evictions and cuts in pay and pensions. 2,500 jobs have been lost from the council in recent years.

Although there were differences of opinion about how the council should handle the budget, it was a very important meeting for galvanising people who want to move out of meeting rooms and onto streets, workplaces and communities to start a fightback.

As a first step towards this, a motion was passed in support of the junior doctors' strike. A model resolution is being circulated round wards and constituencies to this effect and a message of solidarity is being sent from Labour Momentum and from the council to the junior doctors.



Sheffield Momentum doing voter registration in November

As a result of this, the "Meet the Doctors" event on Saturday in the town centre was well supported by Momentum members and by one of the councillors who turned up to assist in petitioning and talking to the public.

The budget will be voted on in March. And in May this year the whole council will be re-elected, giving Momentum an opportunity to question and pressure those candidates who want to make a difference to go onto the council with the purpose of defying the government and demanding sufficient funds to run the services we need.

Some left gains at London Young Labour

By Ellie Clarke

London Young Labour's AGM happened on 9-10 January.

The weekend was mixed, but overall it was a success for the left. Although the left slate did poorly in elections, conference successfully set lots of left-wing policy.

This including a motion calling for the reinstatement of all those members of the Labour Party who have been expelled. The motion specifically named comrades who have been expelled for being asso-

ciated with Workers' Liberty.

The AGM also passed a motion calling for solidarity with the Syrian people both at home and as refugees in Europe, as well as an amendment that called for mandatory reselection of MPs.

One motion had been ruled out of order by the regional Labour Party. This was a full motion that called for the mandatory reselection of MPs. Although we didn't get to hear the motion in the end we did get to have a lively debate about democracy in Young Labour, the purpose of it, and what role, if

any, London Region should play.

As *Solidarity* goes to press results are yet to be announced for the committee election but most people are fairly confident at least a few of the established Labour Left will be elected.

Victory in the motions debate is heartening for the left and we now have much more left wing and progressive policies than any other section of the Labour Party.

This can only serve to strengthen the fight both inside and outside of the Labour Party.

Events

Saturday 16 January

Sheffield Momentum Trident renewal debate
2pm, Central United Reform Church, S1 2JB
bit.ly/tridentdebate

Thursday 21 January

Workers' Liberty London Forum, Syria: war and solidarity
7pm, Indian YMCA, W1T 6AQ
bit.ly/syriasol

Thursday 27 January

Protest against Iranian state visit to France
5.30pm, French Embassy, 58 Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7JT
bit.ly/rouhaniprotest

Saturday 30 January

Health Campaigns Together conference
10.30am, London Welsh Centre, WC1X 8UE
bit.ly/NHSconf

Saturday 30 January

Oppose Nazis in Dover
12 noon, Dover town square
bit.ly/nonazisdover

Saturday 30 January

March against the housing bill
12 noon, Kennington Road/Lambeth Road, London, SE1 6HZ
bit.ly/housingdemo

Saturday 27 February

Stop Trident National Demonstration
12 noon, London
bit.ly/stoptrident

Momentum NHS organising

By Sacha Ismail and Jill Mountford

As previously reported in *Solidarity*, Labour Party supporting NHS activists have launched Momentum NHS to build links between Labour, the wider labour movement and NHS campaigns — and build pressure for Labour to take the lead in the fight to save the Health Service.

We had our first planning meeting after the Save Lewisham Hospital conference on 5 December, have been getting social media in place and drawing more people in, and are now holding an organising meeting on Saturday 16 January,

3pm (email for venue details). The meeting will discuss proposals for mobilising local Labour Parties, and for drawing NHS campaigns into a united front to put pressure on the Labour Party nationally.

That includes the idea of campaigning for Labour to organise a national demonstration to save the NHS and in support of the current doctors' and nurses' struggles.

- momentumnhs@gmail.com
- www.facebook.com/nhsmomentum
- For Labour-focused NHS campaign reports and materials going back to 2012 see labournhslobby.wordpress.com

Stop the Labour Purge!

**Next organising meeting
Tuesday 19 January,
6.30pm, UAL, London,
WC1V 7EY**

Over the Christmas period and in early January, the campaign against expulsions received support from the Bakers' Union and from London Young Labour. It also saw a number of people reinstated following appeals and protests. There are many more still excluded — we need to step up the pressure.

stopthelabourpurge@gmail.com
stopthelabourpurge.wordpress.com

Tube unions call new strikes

By Ollie Moore

Tube unions Aslef, RMT, and Unite have named strikes for 26-27 January, 15-16 February, and 17-18 February.

Each strike is for 24 hours, commencing on the evening of the first day and continuing until the following evening. TSSA's leadership is meeting as *Solidarity* goes to press, and may decide to join the action.

The strikes are part of an ongoing dispute over pay, terms and conditions, and staffing arrangements for 24-hour running ("Night Tube").

Rank-and-file socialist bulletin *Tubeworker* said: "That three unions have returned to battle stations after months of quiet is a hugely

positive and welcome development. We have to make these strikes count: the shutdown of the network needs to be total, picket lines need to be well supported and vibrant, engaging with the public to explain that, contrary to tabloid myths, we're not simply striking for more money but for a decent settlement on terms and conditions that protects our work/life balance."

RMT also has a live ballot mandate for action involving station staff, in a dispute against the "Fit for the Future" scheme, a job cuts and restructuring programme that will see hundreds of frontline jobs go, and all station workers forced into a new grading system under new contracts.



RMT has said it will consult station reps and activists about launching further action around the proposed imposition of "Fit for the Future", which is set to launch at King's Cross and some Central Line stations on 7 February.

• For more info and regular updates, visit the *Tubeworker* blog at workersliberty.org/twblog



GMB and Unison members at Sheffield council striking over cuts in 2013

Sheffield housing strike

By Gemma Short

GMB members working in Sheffield council's housing service struck on 6 January in a dispute over worsening terms and conditions after the introduction of a new management scheme, Housing Plus.

Workers say the restructure will result in pay cuts as well as a

deskilling and downgrading of their jobs. The new system has been piloted in areas of the city and workers say it doesn't work for staff or for service users.

Workers started action with a work to rule in mid-December, after the council announced it would be extending the new scheme throughout the city.

Teachers struggle against cuts

By Gemma Short

Secondary school teachers in Scotland have voted by 93% in favour of industrial action in a consultative ballot over excessive workloads.

Their union, EIS, says teachers are facing mounting workload as a result of a new qualifications system. EIS will now formally ballot its members over organising boycotts of the qualifications.

Teachers in West Dunbartonshire, Scotland, struck on Tuesday 12 January, in a dispute over cuts. The teachers, also organised by EIS, say the cuts will mean subjects as diverse as English and Geography being managed under one faculty, losing specialist teachers and losing pastoral roles.

Struggles in schools across England continue. More strikes are expected at Listerdale school in Rotherham (see *Solidarity* 382) after talks broke down with academy sponsor the Children's Trust. Teachers at Trinity academy in Somerset have voted to strike over bullying and harassment.

Teachers at Small Heath School in Birmingham have



Scottish teachers protesting last year

struck against proposed academisation and are fighting for the reinstatement of their NUT rep Simon O'Hara.

• Reinstate Simon petition: bit.ly/reinstatesimon

Support LANAC candidates in NUT

Workers' Liberty member Jade Baker will be standing as the LANAC candidate for one of the two London seats on the NUT's National Executive. LANAC supporter Kirstie Paton will also be standing.

LANAC supporters in London will be holding a meeting to discuss the campaign on Tuesday 19 January, 6pm, Menard Hall, EC1V 3SW.

20,000 jobs losses, 1,200 more to go

By Michael Tron

Over the past 15 years 20,000 local authority jobs have been lost in Birmingham.

1,200 more job losses are planned in the next two years.

New leader Cllr John Clancy was a former soft-opponent to previous leader Cllr Bore. Cllr Clancy, for whom the term "Clancy-nomics" was coined, had run for, and lost, the Birmingham Labour leadership multiple times over the last few years. His opposition economic program was not truly "anti-cuts", but rather he challenged Bore on his lack of progress in dealing

with overspend on outsourced contracts such as the Service Birmingham Capita contract, whose costs have spiralled from £55 million a year to £120 million.

Bore's city council repeatedly failed to do anything about the contract and were criticised heavily in the press as a result. This year Birmingham Labour has managed to find £2.5m worth of savings in this IT contract. Despite this the council is still making huge cuts to much more crucial spending areas, including the 1,200 jobs they are planning to axe.

Corbyn has personally intervened, telling the press that Birmingham is being "uniquely

attacked" and is receiving the biggest central government funding cuts in the country.

Despite small moves away from the private sector looting of the public purse, Bore's replacement, and Birmingham Labour moving (at a glacial pace) towards greater opposition to austerity, Birmingham is still facing vast cuts.

So what next? With more cuts coming next year and every year for the next five years there is increasingly little option for small anti-cuts gestures.

The only remaining option is for councils to disobey Tory rule and begin refusing to vote through cuts budgets at all.

Fighting union busting

Sheffield recycling workers, employed by The Green Company, will be re-balloted by their union, GMB, in a long running dispute over bullying and health and safety concerns.

Workers have been in dispute since November 2014, and have struck several times. Two GMB reps have been sacked, and just prior to Christmas two more GMB members were victimised.

One of the members has been summoned to a disciplinary hearing for gross misconduct after they phoned into the local radio

station to question council leader Julie Dore on what she would do to resolve the dispute.

Workers are demanding that sacked reps are reinstated; that staff who contributed to whistleblowing of bad practices are reinstated; that they are paid the living wage; for an end to bullying; for an end to zero-hours contracts; and for decent staff facilities on sites.

They also argue for the service to be run in the public interest not for private profit.

FE college pay strike planned

Unison members in Further Education colleges are being balloted to join UCU action over an imposed pay freeze.

UCU members struck against the pay freeze on 10 November, but were not joined by Unison members, despite the union saying it was planning on balloting its members. UCU has submitted a pay claim for a £1 pay rise, but the As-

sociation of Colleges rejected the claim and instead imposed at 0% pay rise.

UCU's Further Education committee met in December and agreed to propose to Unison a date for joint strikes on 2 March, the day that the Association of Colleges is due to hold its conference.

Fighting for fair 16-19 funding

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) is conducting a consultative ballot of its members in Sixth Form Colleges over funding cuts.

Funding for 16-19 education fell by 14% between 2010 and 2015, and Sixth Form Colleges have been hit hardest by these funding cuts. By August 2015, 72% of colleges had dropped courses and 81% of them had increased class sizes.

It is estimated that sixth form col-

leges have lost more than £100 million of funding since 2010. In contrast, the Government agreed to spend £45 million in 2014 to establish just one 16-19 free school in Westminster at a cost of about £90,000 for each student.

The NUT plans to move to a formal ballot, and will hold a national demonstration which will hopefully coincide with a national strike.



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RESPONDING TO COLOGNE ATTACKS

By Cathy Nugent

"We have to stand against sexual violence and sexual abuse against women, no matter who is the perpetrator".

That message, from the demonstration on the steps of Cologne Cathedral on Saturday 9 January (*Observer*, 10 January), is the exactly the right response to the assaults made on women in the city (and elsewhere) on New Year's Eve, by (on all accounts) male migrants from north Africa.

Some of the demonstrators later joined another rally in the city on the same day to protest against the far right anti-Muslim movement Pegida ("Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West") which is making political capital out of these events.

Anti-racism is also a very necessary and urgent political response in Germany, where there are alarming levels of attacks on recent migrants and refugees. In Cologne on Sunday 10 January, there were organised violent attacks by right-wing gangs on men of Pakistani, Syrian and North African origin.

Why were the two Saturday protests not brought together? We don't know the circumstances around the organisation of the two protests, but the *apparent* practical inability of the left to combine defending women from sexual vio-

lence and also opposing racism, raises questions.

According to a German reader, the numbers involved in attacks on New Year's Eve have been exaggerated. Nothing like 1,000 men were involved in the attacks. It is also true that not all the assaults were sexual in nature, and the police are not just investigating migrants.

That all said, very bad sexual assaults, including rape, took place. We need a very clear defence of women. That should stand whatever disgusting racist propaganda follows.

RACISM

Musa Okwonga made this point well in the *New Statesman* (6 January), writing from the perspective of someone who has experienced racism living in Berlin:

"As far as being a black man of African descent goes, the racists in Germany and elsewhere hate us anyway. They thought we were rapists and perverts and other assorted forms of sex attacker the second they set eyes on us. They don't care about the women who were attacked in Cologne and Hamburg..."

"In return, I don't care about them.... I am most concerned, by far, with the safety of the women who may now be more frightened than ever to enter public spaces. I



"No to racism, no to sexism" reads the banner held by protesters in Cologne

don't think that women have ever felt particularly comfortable walking through crowds of drunk and aggressive men at night, regardless of the race of those men. But groups of young men of North African and Arab origin, whatever their intentions, will most likely endure more trepidation from women than before... Why don't we just start with the premise that it is a woman's fundamental right, wherever she is in the world, to walk the streets and not be groped?"

This same author notes that the although sexual violence against women, and the harassment of women in public spaces, is endemic (100% of women in Paris said in a recent survey they had been harassed on trains and the Metro), these assaults were particularly severe. That too is an issue that needs to be addressed.

The assaults in Cologne seem reminiscent of the mob sexual assaults made on women in Tahrir Square during the Arab Spring

and after. Although it is important to be cautious about making claims or drawing parallels, we should remember the reports made by Egyptian feminist and anti-harassment groups who organised to defend women at the time. The assaults were in fact a resurfacing of an older phenomenon of opportunistic assaults made by men on women, which take place at large gatherings on "special occasions".

They were also part of the messy political divisions of the Egyptian revolution.

INSTITUTIONALISED

And it was behaviour stemming from an institutionalised tolerance of sexual harassment. Attitudes of male entitlement were tolerated (or worse) by governments in societies where women are unequivocally second class citizens.

North African society differs from European society not just by

a more pronounced form of sexist "culture" but also by time. Thirty or fifty years ago European women were also second class citizens and such things as rape within marriage were legally endorsed. The answer to sexist attitudes is to challenge them and fight them wherever you are. To fail to do that is to make yourself a neutral bystander in the struggle of women to be out of the domestic sphere, to have an education, to work, to be independent and safe.

As Musa Okwonga puts it, "Why don't we see this as a perfect moment for men, regardless of our ethnic backgrounds, to get genuinely angry about the treatment of women in public spaces: to reject with fury the suggestion that we are somehow conditioned by society forever to treat women as objects, condemned by our uncontrollable sexual desires to lunge at them as they walk past?"

**Against sexual violence!
Against racist attacks! Defend migrants and refugees!**

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